

The authors of a focused ethnographic case study studied how families in semirural areas could support youth to make healthy life choices with respect to HIV risk behavior. Parents felt the transition out of apartheid state into a democratic one has disempowered families, on which youths traditionally relied for support. Building strong community leadership and empowering families with prevention skills could counter this trend, enhance health outcomes and contain anxieties related to social change.

Bean E. Robinson, PhD, associate professor, licensed psychologist, and marriage and family therapist in the department of family medicine and community health at the University of Minnesota Medical School in Minneapolis, observed in the United States that “parents are not so disempowered in our country.” She observed that “black churches are stepping up to the plate and becoming more active with HIV prevention.” The Urban League, a national organization, is also becoming more involved in HIV prevention at the community level, noted Robinson.

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Web Site for Physicians Displaced by Katrina

Natasha Thomsen, MPS

With more than one-third of the healthcare system affected by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, vehicles of communication are needed to bring together physicians with their patients, medical partners and other providers.

Louisiana Health Care Review Inc. (LHCR) of Baton Rouge, LA,

is launching a web site—Find-LaDocs.com—to accomplish this formidable task. Cathy Lewis, director of communications, hopes the site will “give us a picture of what our healthcare provider arena will look like, poststorm.” The intention is to also “provide resources and assistance to our displaced doctors” who may wish to come back and reestablish their practices. The system is also intended to connect resources for future emergencies and identify first-responders.

JNMA Reviewer and Cardiologist Keith Ferdinand, MD, FACC, was displaced from his practice with the Heartbeats Life Center in New Orleans, and is currently working in Atlanta, GA with the Association of Black Cardiologists as director of hurricane relief.

Ferdinand believes that web sites are a useful tool “for those patients who are literate... as it gives them a way to contact their doctor.” He added, however, “a feature that has to be part of any web site is to have a web-only e-mail address,” so the physician can properly follow up with patients and distinguish their e-mail from his other business and personal affairs.

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Parity Needed in Children's Vaccination Rates

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Although the 2004 National Immunization Survey conducted by

the Centers for Disease Control assayed U.S. childhood immunization coverage rates as exceeding the Healthy People 2010 goal of 80%, effort is still needed to achieve the same levels of success within minority populations. Among 19-35-month-old children, 80.9% received all the vaccinations in the recommended baseline series by 2004, compared with 72.8% in 2000. The baseline 4:3:1:3:3 series includes four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTaP), ≥ 3 doses of polio vaccine, ≥ 1 of the measles-containing vaccine, ≥ 3 of Hib vaccine and three doses of hepatitis-B vaccine.

“Diseases that were once killers, like polio and diphtheria, are now rare. Immunizations have been the primary cause for this positive development. We should all be proud of our high national immunization coverage level,” said Lawrence Barker, PhD, chief, Etiology and Surveillance Branch, Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a *JNMA* reviewer, who formerly specialized in children’s vaccination. “Good feelings about high national coverage should not blind us to the existence of populations within the United States for which the immunization picture is less rosy,” cautioned Barker, who noted the 4:3:1:3:3 coverage in Detroit for 2004 was 67.9%—“far short of the national coverage.” Coverage for non-Hispanic African-American children was only 74.5% compared with non-Hispanic white children’s 83.3% coverage.

“These numbers should not cause pessimism or be seen as indicators of a looming public health crisis. Instead, they should serve as a call for us to redouble efforts to eliminate regional and racial/ethnic disparities in immunization coverage, so all American children can be equally protected,” said Barker.